



WEEKLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

SEPTEMBER, 2022

Week-4

22-30 Sep, 2022

★★ Useful for ★★

**CSE, ESE, PSUs, State Services Exams,
SSC and Banking Exams**

22nd SEPTEMBER, 2022

National Conference of Environment Ministers

National Conference of Ministers of Environment, Forest and Climate Change was inaugurated by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually.

Key Highlights

- The Ministers of Environment, Forest and Climate Change from across the country participated in the conference.
- The objective of this conference is to promote cooperative federalism through the promotion of synergized working of central and state governments on issues pertaining to the environment and climate change.

The two-day Conference had six thematic sessions with topics focusing on:

- LiFE
- Combating Climate Change (Updating State Action Plans on Climate Change for Mitigation of Emissions and Adaptation to Climate Impacts)
- PARIVESH (Single Window System for Integrated Green Clearances)
- Forestry Management
- Prevention and Control of Pollution
- Wildlife Management; Plastics and Waste Management.

2023 Breakthrough Prizes

The 2023 winners of the Breakthrough Prizes were announced recently.

Key Highlights

- The Breakthrough Prizes, created in 2010 by a group of Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, are the most richly endowed awards in science, disbursing more than the Nobel prizes.
- Three prizes were awarded this year in the life sciences category, one for mathematics and one for physics.

- The Breakthrough Prize in mathematics was awarded to Daniel Spielman of Yale University for multiple discoveries in theoretical computer science and mathematics.
- The prize in fundamental physics was shared by Charles Bennett, Gilles Brassard, David Deutsch and Peter Shor for their work in quantum information.
- Clifford Brangwynne and Anthony Hyman won a life sciences prize for discovering a new mechanism of cellular organization.
- The other life sciences prizes were awarded to Demis Hassabis and John Jumper for developing AlphaFold, which predicts the structure of proteins, and Emmanuel Mignot and Masashi Yanagisawa for discovering the causes of narcolepsy.

REC Ltd. becomes 12th 'Maharatna' company

Power sector focussed NBFC REC Ltd has been accorded the status of Maharatna central public sector enterprise (CPSE).

Key Highlights

- NBFC REC Ltd has become the 12th company to attain the Maharatna status.
- The move would provide the state-run company greater operational and financial autonomy.
- Centre is also considering granting the status of a development finance institution (DFI) to REC Ltd to enable the state-run company to steer global climate funding and net zero investment in the country.
- The other 11 Maharatna CPSEs at present are: Power Finance Corporation, Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd, Bharat Petroleum Corp. Ltd, Coal India Ltd, GAIL (India) Ltd, Hindustan Petroleum Corp. Ltd, Indian Oil Corp. Ltd, NTPC Ltd, Oil & Natural Gas Corp. Ltd, Power Grid Corp. of India Ltd, and Steel Authority of India Ltd.
- India has 13 Navratna and 74 Miniratna CPSEs.

About REC

- Rural Electrification Corporation Limited (REC) is a Non-banking Financial Company (NBFC) focusing on power sector financing and development across India.
- It was established in 1969.
- It provides financial assistance to state electricity boards, state governments, central and state power utilities, independent power producers, rural electric cooperatives and private sector utilities.

About "Maharatna" Status

- For a company to be categorised as a Maharatna status, a company should be listed on an Indian stock exchange and have an average annual turnover of over 25,000 crore during the previous three years.
- It should also have an average annual net worth during the previous three years of more than 15,000 crore and an average net profit of over 5,000 crore during the same period.
- REC can now invest up to 5,000 crore, or 15% of its net worth, in a single project after its Maharatna status.

23rd SEPTEMBER, 2022

US lawmakers recently voted to ratify the Kigali Amendment

The US Senate voted to approve the international climate treaty for the first time in 30 years, agreeing in a rare bipartisan deal to phase out the use of industrial chemicals commonly found in refrigerators and air-conditioners.

Key Highlights

- By a vote of 69 to 27 the United States joined the 2016 Kigali Agreement.
- The US have already enacted policies to reduce the production and importation of hydrofluorocarbons in

the United States by 85 percent over the next 15 years, and industry has turned to alternative chemicals.

- The Montreal Protocol, was a landmark agreement among world governments to phase out the production and consumption of ozone-depleting substances, particularly chlorofluorocarbons used in household devices such as refrigerators and air conditioners.
- It was signed in 1987 and ratified by the United States a year later,
- A related class of substances, hydrofluorocarbons, emerged as a popular substitute. While these chemicals do not damage the ozone layer, they act as extremely potent greenhouse gases, trapping heat in the atmosphere 1,000 times more effectively than carbon dioxide.
- In 2016, countries agreed to make an amendment to the Montreal Protocol that would phase out hydrofluorocarbons. It was called the Kigali Amendment, named after the capital of Rwanda, where it was signed.
- The amendment has since been ratified or accepted by 137 nations, including China and India. Yet U.S. ratification stalled during the President Trump administration, which was hostile both to multilateral treaties and to climate action.

32nd Global Financial Centres Index released

The 32nd edition of Global Financial Centres Index(GFCI) was released recently.

Key Highlights

- New York leads the index, with London at the second position.
- Singapore became Asia's top financial centre, overtaking Hong Kong in the world financial centres ranking.
- Paris returned to the top ten in the index, replacing Tokyo which fell to 16th place.

- Shanghai, Beijing and Shenzhen from China also maintained spots in the top 10.
- In the Middle East, Dubai and Abu Dhabi took first and second place, respectively, with Dubai stable in the rankings at 17th place and Abu Dhabi sitting in 32nd place.
- The index, prepared by the Z/Yen Partners and the China Development Institute think tanks, ranks 119 financial centers and employs data obtained from thousands of financial services professionals answering an online questionnaire.
- Public health experts have been opposed to the health-star rating system as they say it gives a “health halo” because of its positive connotation making it harder to identify harmful products.
- They instead recommend warning labels such as an octagonal “stop” symbol which global studies have shown is the only format that has led to a positive impact on food and beverage purchases forcing the industry, for example in Chile, to reformulate their products and remove major amounts of sugar and salt.
- Stakeholders have been given 60 days to submit their responses to the draft notification.

FSSAI issued draft notification on Indian Nutrition Rating (INR)

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India has issued a draft notification on front-of-package labelling, which proposes “Indian Nutrition Rating” (INR) modelled on the health star-rating system.

Key Highlights

The draft of the amended Food Safety and Standards (Labelling & Display) Regulations, 2020 requires packaged food to display the prescribed format of INR by assigning a rating from 1/2 star (least healthy) to five stars (healthiest). The “Indian Nutrition Rating” (INR) is to be calculated on the basis of:

- Contribution of energy
- Saturated fat
- Total sugar
- Sodium
- Positive nutrients, per 100 gm of solid food or 100 ml of liquid food.
- According to the notification, the star assigned to a product shall be displayed close in proximity to the name or brand name of the product on front of pack.
- Certain food products such as milk and milk-based products, egg-based desserts, infant formula, salads and sandwich spreads and alcoholic beverages have been exempted.

24th SEPTEMBER, 2022

Draft Indian Telecommunications Bill, 2022

The Department of Telecommunications is set to introduce a new Indian Telecommunications Bill, 2022 in parliament.

Key Provisions

- **The bill seeks to replace three laws:** the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885, the Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act, 1933 and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act, 1950.
- **Easy and fast approvals:** As per Telecom Minister, the new bill will provide legal backing to Right of Way actions, providing an enabling framework for reducing timelines for approvals and mooted remedies for damage to fibres and towers.
- **Easy mergers and acquisitions:** The framework for mergers and acquisitions will be simplified and relief,.
- **Assignment of spectrum:** Spectrum can be assigned through auction or administrative process, depending on the requirements. The bill also states in case of insolvency, spectrum assigned to the entity shall revert to government control.

- **OTT platforms under the law:** The draft bill has also enlarged the definition of telecommunication services, bringing over-the-top (OTT) communication services such as Whatsapp, Signal and Telegram, satellite-based communication service, internet and broadband services, in-flight and maritime connectivity services etc, under its ambit. OTT players would have to take licences, share revenue with the government and be treated to the same rules as telecom service providers.
- **Waiver in case of extraordinary circumstances:** In case of default payment by a licensee of any amount and it has been determined that there exist extraordinary circumstance, the government may defer payment of such amounts, conversion of part or all the amounts payable into shares, write-off of such amounts or relief from payment of such amounts.
- **Suspension of telecommunication:** The government has powers to suspend any communication. In the event of war or national security issues, the government can take over the control and management of, or suspending the operation of, or entrusting any authority of the Government to manage any or all of any telecommunication services.
- **Dispute resolution:** The Bill provides for the right of appeal before the appellate authority. It also creates an enabling provision for the central government to set up an alternate dispute resolution mechanism such as arbitration, mediation or other process of dispute resolution.
- **Revoking of licences and penalties:** In case of breach of license conditions, the DoT can revoke such license, registration, authorization or assignment and impose a penalty. The penalty regime has been changed, with varying amounts of penalties depending on the severity of the offence.

Wipro sacked employees involved in moonlighting

Wipro has taken a tough stand against employees involved in moonlighting and sacked 300 employees.

Key Highlights

- Wipro terminated the services of 300 staff members who it discovered were working for its competitors while still being on the company's payroll.
- Moonlighting refers to pursuing more than one job at a time and remote working has helped employees take up this option. Technology and software companies in India are divided on whether to allow their employees to moonlight for other companies while still being on their payrolls or not.
- Moonlighting has become a topic of debate in the IT industry as working from home became the normal norm during the COVID-19 pandemic, which is believed to have led to a rise in dual employment.
- Moonlighting has somewhat divided the Indian IT firm following Wipro's chief's remarks.
- Tata Consultancy Services' chief operating officer (CFO) NG Subramaniam has termed it an ethical issue, while Tech Mahindra CEO CP Gurnani said he could be open to the practice if it helps employees make extra money.

QUAD signed Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) partnership

Quad countries recently signed the Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) partnership guidelines.

Key Highlights

- The Quad grouping signed Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) partnership guidelines during a ministerial meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York.
- The Partnership has been designed to respond to the vulnerabilities of the Indo-Pacific region.
- It will serve as a dedicated framework for Quad partners to coordinate their disaster response operations in the region.

- Quad partners may provide joint or coordinated individual assistance in crisis preparation or alert, crisis-response or post crisis review phases of disaster response.
- Any humanitarian action will be carried out with respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity of the affected state.
- Under the partnership, Quad partners will promote inclusion by advancing gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment, ensuring persons with disabilities are agents and beneficiaries of humanitarian action, and by ensuring indigenous people, minority groups and persons in vulnerable situations are not left behind.
- The guidelines call for zero tolerance for inaction on tackling Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH).
- Quad partners will meet twice a year to share lessons and operational updates and will conduct at least one scenario-based table-top exercise to improve preparedness, coordination and interoperability.
- The Centre for Creative Learning, IIT Gandhinagar is the knowledge partner for the initiative.
- The National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT) 2020 was introduced to promote the Indian toy industry including traditional handicrafts and handmade toys with the objective of establishing India as a global Toy hub.

Indian Railways is installing Real-Time Train Information System (RTIS)

Indian railways is installing a Real-Time Train Information System (RTIS), developed in collaboration with ISRO for automatic acquisition of train movement timing at the stations.

Key Highlights

- Developed in collaboration with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Real Time Train Information System (RTIS) is being installed on the trains for automatic acquisition of its "movement timing at the stations, including that of arrival and departure or run-through.
- They get automatically plotted on the control chart of those trains in the Control Office Application (COA) system.
- RTIS will give midsection updates with a periodicity of 30 seconds.
- The Train Control can now track the location and speed of RTIS enabled locomotives /train more closely, without any manual intervention.
- The RTIS uses information from GSAT satellites that have GAGAN payloads for tracking the movement of trains and sends the information down to the Central Location Server (CLS) of Centre for Railway Information Systems (CRIS).
- The same information is passed on using enterprise service BUS in CRIS' data centre to the National Train Enquiry System (NTES). From there on, NTES feeds that information to all the public information dissemination systems be it websites, mobile apps, the 139 railway helpline number, or any other medium

25th SEPTEMBER, 2022

Swachh Toycathon Competition

The ministry of housing and urban affairs (MoHUA) launched the Swachh Toycathon under the Swachh Amrit Mahotsav.

Key Highlights

- The competition is a convergence between the National Action Plan for Toys (NAPT) and Swachh Bharat Mission phase two (SBM 2.0).
- It seeks to explore solutions for the use of waste in manufacturing toys.
- It was opened to individuals and groups to bring forth innovation in toy designs using dry waste.
- The focus will be on efficient designs that can be replicated on a larger scale, toys that comply with minimum safety standards and aesthetics of the toys.

- RTIS devices have been installed for 2700 locomotives in 21 electric loco sheds.
- As part of Phase-II roll out, 6000 more locomotives across 50 loco sheds shall be covered by utilising ISRO's Satcom hub.

Food Barons 2022 report released

The Food Barons 2022 report was released just weeks ahead of a high-level United Nations Committee meeting on World Food Security.

Key Highlights

- According to the report, dominance over food markets has shifted east towards countries like India and China.
- Four to six companies influence the global market in key sectors, agricultural research and policy decisions.
- When it comes to agrochemicals such as seeds, pesticides, and fertilisers, China's Syngenta Group, the world's largest agrochemical firm, owns one-fourth of the global market share.
- Syngenta along with Germany's Bayer and BASF Agricultural Solutions, and Corteva in the United States, have 62.3% of the global market share.
- India's UPL Limited, the world's fifth-largest agrochemical firm, had a 7.9% of the global market share.
- ETC report stated, 10 companies controlled 40% of the global market about 25 years ago, while today only two firms have 40% of the market share.

26th SEPTEMBER, 2022

Five major palm oil importing countries formed Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA)

The apex edible oil industry associations from five major palm oil importing countries of Asia-India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal- have come together to form the Asian Palm Oil Alliance (APOA).

Key Highlights

- APOA was launched during the Globoil Summit at Agra.
- The APOA alliance is initiated by the apex solvent extractors associations (SEA) of India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal.
- In the coming year, the membership would be further expanded to include other select companies or industry organisations operating in the production and/or refining of palm oil in Asia.
- The APOA is expected to safeguard the economic and business interests of the palm- oil consuming countries and create a level playing field for all fats and oils used in food, feed and oleochemicals in Asia.
- It will further work towards increasing the consumption of sustainable palm oil in member countries
- Asian markets are responsible for about 40% of global demand for palm oil.
- India is the largest importer of Palm oil in the Asian region and accounts for 15% of global imports.
- China with 9%, Pakistan with 4% and Bangladesh with 2% of the global imports are the other significant countries with a stake in palm oil production and trade.

India Palm oil imports

- India is one of the largest buyers of Indonesian palm oil.
- India imports around 13-13.5 million tonnes of edible oils every year, of which around 8-8.5 million tonnes (around 63 per cent) is palm oil.
- Of this, 8-8.5 million tonnes of palm oil, almost 45-47 per cent in recent times, came from Indonesia and the remaining from neighbouring Malaysia.

Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries

Dr. Jitendra Singh, announced the launch of the “Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries”.

Key Highlights

- Dr Jitendra Singh, announced the launch of the “Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries” at Global Clean Energy Action Forum at Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania in the United States developed by co-leads and active inputs from Brazil, Canada, EC and the UK.
- The Mission aims at greater international collaboration and the need for increased financing for Energy Research, Development, and Demonstration (RD&D).
- Innovation Roadmap of the Mission Integrated Biorefineries” aims to fill the void by identifying gaps and challenges in current biorefining value chain.
- It also provides policymakers with a strategy framework to establish a rising RD&D portfolio over the next five years, specific financing proposals across the entire spectrum of vital Biorefinery technologies, and rapid action suggestions.

APEDA facilitated the export of first contingent of plant-based meat

APEDA facilitated the export of the first consignment of plant-based meat products under the Vegan food category from Nadiad in Kheda district in Gujarat to California, the United States of America (USA).

Key Highlights

- In a move to boost exports of unique agricultural processed food products, the centre through apex export promotion body-Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Authority (APEDA)-facilitated the export of first consignment of plant-based meat products under Vegan food category from Nadiad in Kheda district in Gujarat to California, the United States of America (USA).

- With the growing popularity of vegan food products in developed countries, the plant-based food products have a huge export potential in the international market due to the high nutrient value of the vegan food products.
- Due to its rich fiber and lesser cholesterol contents, vegan food products are becoming alternative food products across the globe.
- The APEDA has planned to promote a variety of vegan foods products, including pancake, snacks, cheese, etc, to the countries of Australia, Israel, New Zealand and others in coming months.

27th SEPTEMBER, 2022

World bank approve \$350 million loan for SRESTHA-G

The World Bank has approved a loan of \$350 million to the state of Gujarat for spending on healthcare services.

Key Highlights

- World Bank has approved a USD 350 million or over 2,832 crore loan to Gujarat for augmenting health services with a special focus on adolescent girls and disease surveillance
- The funding will come from the World Bank arm International Bank of Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), carrying a maturity of 18 years including a grace period of 5.5 years.
- According to the World Bank, the loan amount will be utilised through the state government's Systems Reform Endeavours For Transformed Health Achievement In Gujarat (SRESTHA-G) programme which will enable more people to access a wider range of high-quality health services.
- It further stated that SRESTHA-G will put special emphasis on improving the health and nutrition of adolescent girls and boys with priority accorded to 14 districts where more than 70 percent of adolescent girls are anaemic.

Reduction in Child Mortality in India

As per the recently released Sample Registration System (SRS) Statistical Report 2020, India has witnessed a progressive reduction in IMR, U5MR and NMR since 2014.

Key Highlights

The report was released by the Registrar General of India (RGI).

Under 5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) for the country has shown significant decline of 3 points from 2019 (32 per 1000 live births in 2020 against 35 per 1000 live births in 2019). It varies from 36 in rural areas to 21 in urban areas.

- U5MR for Female is higher (33) than male (31). There has been a decline of 4 points in male U5MR and 3 points in female U5MR during the corresponding period.
- Highest decline of U5MR is observed in the State of Uttar Pradesh (5 points) and Karnataka (5 points)

Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) has also registered 2-point decline to 28 per 1000 live births in 2020 from 30 per 1000 live births in 2019 .

Neonatal Mortality Rate has also declined by 2 points from 22 per 1000 live births in 2019 to 20 per 1000 live births in 2020

About SRS

- The SRS is a demographic survey for providing annual estimates of IMR, BR, DR and other fertility at the national and sub-national levels. It was started in 1964-65 by the Registrar General of India.

About RGI

- It was founded in 1961 by the Government of India under the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- It conducts and analyses the results of the demographic surveys (including the Census of India and the Linguistic Survey of India).

International Cricket Council (ICC) new rules

The International Cricket Council (ICC) has formed certain rules and made some major changes in the cricket which will be implemented from October 1.

Key Highlights

The Men's Cricket Committee (MCC), led by former India captain Sourav Ganguly, recommended the changes to the playing rules in MCC's updated third edition of the 2017 Code of the Laws of Cricket.

The changes that have been brought in International cricket are:

- Permanent ban of use of saliva to polish the ball.
- After a batter is out caught, the incoming batter shall be walking to the striker's end, irrespective of whether the batters crossed prior to the catch being taken.
- The practice of running out the non-striker when the batter leaves the crease during bowler's runup or before the ball is bowled, popularly called 'Mankading' earlier, will be legal now. The method of dismissal will now be considered as run out rather than 'Unfair Play'.
- A batter will now have 120 seconds to reach the ground and take strike after the fall of a wicket in ODIs and Tests. The threshold timing of 90 seconds in T20Is remains unchanged.
- Any unfair movement by the fielding team in the field while the bowler is running into bowl, would lead to the imposition of a five-run penalty on the fielding team and the delivery would be deemed a 'Dead Ball'.
- A batter won't be allowed to move beyond the confines of the pitch to play a delivery; any such shot played will cause the umpire to call the ball dead. Also, any ball which would force the batter to leave the pitch will be called a no-ball and result in a free-hit.

- If the fielding side does not bowl the first ball of the final over of the innings by the scheduled time and if they are behind the time, maximum four fielders (one fewer than usual) will be allowed outside the 30-yard circle for the remainder of the innings. This rule will be in effect in the T20 World Cup and will also be adopted in ODIs.
- Earlier, a bowler could attempt to run-out the striker if they saw the batter advancing down the wicket before entering their delivery stride. This practice will now be called a 'Dead ball'.

- This enables the creation of longitudinal health records for individuals across various healthcare providers, and improves clinical decision-making by healthcare providers.
- The mission provides equitable access to quality healthcare by encouraging use of technologies such as telemedicine and enabling national portability of health services, the ministry said.

28th SEPTEMBER, 2022

Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission crossed crore health records

The Health Minister informed that Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) has crossed the landmark of 1 crore digitally linked health records with over 27 lakh records linked in a day.

Key Highlights

- The Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM) aims to develop the backbone necessary to support the integrated digital health infrastructure of the country.
- It aims to bridge the existing gap amongst different stakeholders of the Healthcare ecosystem through digital highways.
- On February 26, 2022, the Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the national rollout of the Central Sector Scheme, the Ayushman Bharat Digital.
- Mission (ABDM) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare with a budget of Rs 1,600 crores for five years.
- The National Health Authority (NHA) is the implementing agency of the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- Under the ABDM, citizens can create their ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account) numbers, to which their digital health records can be linked.

Russian President announced partial military mobilisation

Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for the "partial mobilization" of the country's military reservists, in a move that is likely to escalate Moscow's ongoing war with Ukraine.

Key Highlights

- In a televised address, Putin said the mobilisation would begin immediately and that those called up would be granted the same status as regulars in the armed forces.
- The mobilisation will see 300,000 reservists drafted. Conscripts and students will not be called up and will affect only those with combat experience, according to Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu.
- In his speech, Putin reiterated that the goal of Russia's invasion of Ukraine was the liberation of the Donbas region.
- Share markets across the world showed movement as Russian President Vladimir Putin announced partial mobilisation in the country. The escalation has raised concerns about energy supplies as well as increased demand for weapons.
- A partial mobilisation is a hazy concept, but it could mean that Russian businesses and citizens have to contribute more to the war effort. Russia has not yet declared war on Ukraine, despite having invaded in February, and it calls its invasion a "special military operation."

Giorgia Meloni is set to become the first female prime minister of Italy

Brothers of Italy, leader Giorgia Meloni has claimed victory in a general election that seems set to install her as Italy's first female prime minister.

Key Highlights

- Giorgia Meloni is leading the most far-right government.
- Preliminary results put an alliance of far-right parties, led by Meloni's ultraconservative party, to win at least 44% of the vote.
- Meloni entered Italy's crowded political scene in 2006 and co-founded the Brothers of Italy in 2012, a party whose agenda is rooted in Euroskepticism and anti-immigration policies.
- In the last election in 2018, the party won just 4.5% of the vote, but its popularity has soared in recent years, underscoring Italy's longstanding rejection of mainstream politics.
- Meloni differs from her coalition partner leaders on the issue of Ukraine. Meloni has been steadfast in her support for defending Ukraine.
- Meloni entered politics at age 15 in 1992, joining the neo-fascist Social Movement, a group with pronounced sympathy for Benito Mussolini, the country's dictator from 1925 to 1945.
- Meloni is deeply conservative, openly anti-LGBT, and has threatened to place same-sex unions, which were legalized in Italy in 2016, under review. She has also called abortion a "tragedy," raising fears for the future of women's rights in the country.

29th SEPTEMBER, 2022

Khosta-2 variant of coronavirus found in Russian

A team of American researchers has now identified a new coronavirus variant, Khosta-2, in Russian bats, capable of infecting people.

Key Highlights

- Health experts from US has warned that recently discovered coronavirus variant, Khosta-2, found in Russian bats, could also infect humans.
- According to research published in the journal PLoS Pathogens, the virus is classified as a sarbecovirus, a member of the coronavirus family. It attaches to the same protein, ACE2, that coronavirus uses to penetrate human cells.
- There are no cases of human infection with Khosta virus yet reported. However, the probability of the Zoonotic spillover of the sarbecoviruses from animals to humans could occur.
- When scientists combined serum from people vaccinated against Covid-19 with Khosta-2, the antibodies in the serum were unable to neutralise the virus. The same thing happened when the team combined the Khosta-2 with the serum from people who had recently recovered from Omicron infection.

New target set under National Clean Air Programme (NCAP)

The Centre has set a new target of a 40% reduction in particulate matter concentration in cities covered under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP) by 2026.

Key Highlights

- This year, the centre is planning to take added measures to lessen at least 40 percent of the particulate matter concentration in cities covered under the National Clean Air Programme (NCAP); the target is for 2026, updating the earlier goal of reducing up to 20 percent PM by 2024.
- NCAP has prepared action plans that include measures to improve the air quality in the cities. These include establishing a comprehensive monitoring network, reducing industrial and vehicular emissions, and increasing awareness about the issue.

30th SEPTEMBER, 2022

- The Ministry of Environment has further informed that under its NCAP scheme 95 out of the 131 non-attainment cities have shown an overall improvement in their PM10 levels in 2021 compared to their levels four years back.
- Moreover, cities like Chennai, Madurai, and Nashik have also met the national standards for annual average PM10 concentration (60 micrograms per cubic metre).
- The acceptable annual standard for PM2.5 is 40 micrograms per cubic metre in a city, as set by the National Pollution Control Board.
- In Delhi, the concentration of PM10 has come down from 241 micrograms per cubic metre in 2017 to 196 micrograms in 2021.
- The winter action plan of the Delhi government includes various measures such as establishing a green app and smog tower, improving the air quality monitoring system, and establishing a real-time source apportionment centre.

Indian government launched the JALDOOT App

The Ministry of Rural Development has developed the Jaldoot application to record the water levels of selected wells in villages across the country.

Key Highlights

- The Union Rural Development Ministry launched a mobile application that will enable gram rojgar sahayaks to measure the water level of selected wells twice a year — before and after the monsoon.
- This app will be used across the country to measure the water level of two or three selected wells in a village.
- Jaldoots, the personnel assigned to measure water level, will upload the geo-tagged photographs through the app on every occasion of measurement.
- The ground water data could be utilised as part of the Gram Panchayat Development Plan and MGNREGA planning exercises.

Indigenously developed special aviation fuel AVGAS 100 LL launched

The Centre launched indigenously-developed AVGAS 100 LL, a special aviation fuel meant for piston engine aircraft and unmanned ariel vehicles.

Key Highlights

- The fuel has been developed by Indian Oil Corporation.
- AV GAS 100 LL produced by Indian Oil's flagship refinery at Vadodara has been tested and certified by Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).
- It is a higher-octane Aviation fuel meeting the product specifications with superior performance quality standards, as compared to imported grades.
- Currently, India is importing this product from European countries.
- The launch of indigenous AV GAS 100 LL is important to serve the needs of a thriving aviation industry with increase in footfall on airports, rise in number of aircraft and Flying Training Organisations (FTOs) in trainee aircraft for pilot training in future.
- AV Gas market is expected to grow from the current \$1.92 billion to \$2.71 billion by 2029. India plans to set up a new facility soon to target export opportunities, besides catering to the domestic demand.

Supreme Court live streamed bench proceedings in YouTube

Country's apex court recently, live streamed three bench proceedings simultaneously on YouTube.

Key Highlights

- In a first, the Supreme Court took a giant leap towards transparency and accessibility as it live streamed proceedings of three constitution benches simultaneously through its webcast and video streaming on "YouTube".

- The live stream was watched by over 8 lakh viewers.
- Supreme Court said that the decision to live-stream the proceedings of the Constitution benches was taken by the full court on September 20, 2022, and soon thereafter trial runs were undertaken by the registry.
- Proceedings of three constitution benches including a bench headed by Chief Justice of India UU Lalit, which heard and reserved its verdict on a batch of pleas challenging the validity of the 103rd Constitution amendment providing 10 per cent reservation to economically weaker sections (EWS) persons in admissions and government jobs.
- The second five-judge bench headed by Justice DY Chandrachud heard a batch of petitions related to the Maharashtra political crisis.
- The third five-judge bench was headed by Justice SK Kaul which considered questions, including whether a pre-enrollment examination can be prescribed by the Bar Council of India under the Advocates Act, 1961.
- On August 26, for the first time since its inception, the Supreme Court live-streamed proceedings of a bench headed by then Chief Justice (since retired) N V Ramana through a webcast portal.
- It was a ceremonial proceeding as Justice Ramana was to demit office that day.
- During the COVID pandemic times, when the top court had curtailed its functioning and was mostly working through virtual mode, then Chief Justice NV Ramana started live streaming of proceedings of various courts for journalists.
- Exactly four years ago, on September 27, 2018, the then Chief Justice of India CJI Dipak Misra, heading a bench delivered the landmark judgement on a live telecast or webcast of important proceedings in

matters of constitutional importance, saying “sunlight is the best disinfectant”.

- It had said as a pilot project, only a specified category of cases that are of constitutional or national importance and are being argued before a constitution bench should be live streamed.
- The top court had said that sensitive cases such as those dealing with matrimonial disputes or sexual assault should not be live streamed.

Central Government banned Popular Front of India for 5 years

The Indian government has declared Popular Front of India and its associates or affiliates as an “unlawful association” with immediate effect for five years.

Key Highlights

- This came after the police carried out fresh raids and detained PFI activists across several states.
- As per Ministry of home Affairs, PFI and its associates or affiliates or fronts have been indulging in unlawful activities, which are prejudicial to the integrity, sovereignty and security of the country and have the potential of disturbing public peace and communal harmony of the country and supporting militancy in the country.
- There had been a number of instances of international linkages of PFI with Global Terrorist Groups like Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), according to the notification.
- MHA said that some activists of the PFI have joined Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and participated in terror activities in Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. Some of these PFI cadres linked to ISIS have been killed in these conflict theatres and some have been arrested by State Police and Central Agencies.

About Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA)

- The UAPA was originally passed in 1967 and later underwent amendments in 2004, 2008 and 2013.
- According to the Act, the union government may proclaim or designate an organisation as a terrorist organisation if it: (i) commits or participates in acts of terrorism, (ii) prepares for terrorism, (iii) promotes terrorism, or (iv) is otherwise involved in terrorism. The Bill also empowers the government to designate individuals as terrorists on the same grounds.
- UAPA has the death penalty and life imprisonment as the highest punishments.
- Section 3 of UAPA allows the Central government (MHA) to declare an organization an "unlawful association" or a "terrorist organization".
- The UAPA defines an "unlawful association" as any organisation that promotes enmity between different groups and makes assertions that are detrimental to national integration, as defined in (Sections 153A or 153B) the Indian Penal Code (IPC).
- An unlawful association is also one that encourages or assists people to engage in illegal activity or whose members engage in such activity.

UAPA Tribunal

- The UAPA empowers the Central Government to establish a tribunal in order to ensure its bans have long-term legal sanctity.
- The Centre issues orders declaring an organisation "unlawful" under the UAPA, and no such notification takes effect until the tribunal confirms it.

